

Klatch & Maw

volcofsky

MAW

Wilson, Micky Adam Wilson kneeling, licking flickers of vomit out the corners of Klatch's moist lips, a hand caressing soft her belly. She was breathing like a dead person he'd seen on COPS breathe, except she wasn't breathing his breath. So he thought he thought she meant she would be okay now, and her eyes opened seemed to recognize nothing and closed slow again so she would be alright. He thought maybe should turn her off her back turn her around right so nothing like Hendrix happened. But he felt he thought he didn't want maybe shouldn't move her and licked his lips standing a hand to her forehead said a little quietly

"I'ma go to the Rain I'll see you later."

Her eyes open her terrific impersonal stare making his heart drop and slowly close, her head turns away. *Alright she alright now* opens the door for him and pretends he's not running.

Sweet sour taste on her lips something like tequila made him think tequila and then the Rain.

"I look forward to meeting you again," what she said when they first had met.

One key for two locks and you had to jiggle them both. The old words even seemed dressed in a kind of cleaner word-clothes, in fact that phrase seemed maybe the most well-dressed words he'd ever heard, before or since. Not much rememory of the words before them, remembering "Sorry" was the first word he ever spoke to her, his smoke in her face the first time he saw it. Between then and now they'd both said it too many times and all the words seemed to get poorer and poorer dressed, fray themselves unravel to a thinness that the silence now seemed to chew away on. Combing large chunks

of hair out the head of a doll was what it seemed the time was like. Pretty. Pretty pretty pretty prit-tee.

Funny cunt with a white beard. Like we both gotta look backward now to meet either of us again. His whole kit sold. My whole kit sold. Two years of drumming in the Mississippi soybean fields and here he is down and out and done like motherfuck Rufus Scott. Catch Klatch snatch.

He lingers at the top of the stoop watching an avalanche of mist fall upon the city across the river. Helicopters quietly floating out of it flaming eyes turning upon the white night air. I have very curly dark blond hair, brown eyes that are almost black, he thinks. Love eats vomit who paid rent with drums. Noting nothing works now since silence occupies the rent. I smell a barbecue and gasoline. I hear speaker-distorted salsa it is a scorched wind. For the first time in my life I have been faithful to a woman. Fourteen months I am eager for her home. I regard her windows as my eyes. We create a finite circle in infinite space. We have passed through one another, we have exchanged blood. Klatch she calls me Maw.

Walking towards the Rain Bar along the river a runty woman covered with scabs touches his arm as he passes.

“Date blonde?”

He can smell her. Beneath her dirty bandana her eyes are wide and black. She misses a tooth. A tiny cross and a tiny heart hang from a chain around her neck.

He sits on top an iron dock mooring she dips to one knee before him. Hits on her stem and lays it and the lighter by her purse at his feet. Pretends to suck him off but uses mostly her hands which squeak faintly on the rubber. He lights the frayed tie of her

bandana with the lighter, the grease in her hair flares and goes up. He runs. In the distance he can see a flaming wheel roll off the dock into the river.

Thirty five dollars. He throws the stem and the purse into the water.

At the Rain Bar he buys Willie and Neil Duriam each two rounds but sits away from them, staring through the plate glass swinging doors across the river at the covered city. After his second taking a piss realizes he's still wearing the rubber and it's halfway filled with urine. He rips a hole in the end unrolls it and flushes it down the toilet. Neil Duriam walks in.

"How's your life?" Micky says.

"You already asked," Neil says.

A fine rain falls home. He sits on the iron dock mooring again, watching the river flicker like some underwater scoreboard gone mad. Klatch is gone when he gets in.

Klatch's

"It is a honeycomb earth."

Sunlight explodes through the window. It is a searchlight the whole room inhales the walls ache the room from all around her begins to lean away, aching.

"It is a honeycomb earth."

A man's voice. No matter where she faces it is coming from just behind her. *This is my guide* Sunlight so fierce it is a severe wind, bending the trees in her room and pressing her lips back on her face like G-force film she had seen. Astronauts. Testpilots on rocketsleds sliding in straps across the desert. Faces she copied in her handmirror, her desert heirloom. No. Grandmother's heirloom.

Luxuriant lush trees fill the whole room bending in the steady blast of sunlight. The room aches, leaning. This is the voice of her guide each time she turns the whisper slips away.

"It is a honeycomb earth."

The entire earth flooded with the nectar of suffering. The etymology of *earth* digs into her womb then races like a flaming thread into the night sky and shatters into what are now the stars. The whisper is sucked up behind it. But she knows this is what it means. The earth pulses and runs with an amber tide of suffering. It is good. She knows. It is good.

The room leans, aching. Weblines attach it to her entirely, parachutish, nerverlike. The etymology of *earth* traces her outline like a wand and severs each and every line. *I press my belly in I can keep the room Can keep it together This is what the honeycomb means I know*

The whisper leaps out the window into the searchlight.

Maw's tongue runs along her lips the sun's wind tears out the window in a terrible emptying retrograde. The room drops and is still. The weblines hang motionless. Maw's warm palm rubs a circle into her belly. *I can smell the darkness*

The bulb in the ceiling obscures Maw's face when she looks, but looking past him she can see Africa and the man fighting the dog. *Im right It is still night* Maw's got a question in his face.

She feels the bed sink and rise and Maw presses a hand to her forehead. This hand is cool.

"I'ma go to the Rain I'll see you later," Maw says.

She looks at him. He is standing before the window the whisper leapt from. She had forgotten. He couldn't know but standing there makes it all rush back and somehow makes him in the way. It is gone. Lost. She feels her heart drop. The question is still in his face. She closes her eyes, turning her head, away.

The door and the locks, footsteps dropping to the shuddercry of the front door.

For a moment the room inhales again, a deep redblack coalglow rises up from the floor. She catches sight of a man walking through. It is not the guide. He is wearing a suit, wearing shoes.

She sits up. A piece of her hair catches at the bottom of the headboard and makes her hum. Twelve fiftythree. On the window her reflected head stares back at her from above the fogcovered city. Lights not in accord blink through all her face.

Helicopters float soundlessly from her smoking head, their fierce burning eyes turning slow in the darkness. From the halffilled enamelblue souppot on the floor by the bed the odor of her own vomit fills her nose. *Maw Anything my body puts out hes willing to take in Always an appetite for you baby he says And fuck if its almost more*

*than I can do to let any of him in lately Im closing I know it closing up cant
stop it cant know him or me I'm losing cant see the closer the farther Her hand
reaches out and caresses his face. Maw sweet Maw*

Each light blinks in its own tone. Looking she hears, a staggered irregular melody as if the wind were bearing the forgotten calls of a hundred lost vessels upon an unreachable sea. Watching she listens and listening hears the song of a receding, everdiminishing world; as if her entire life were departing in ripples from all around her; and each lost piece echoed a single tone become a light blinking slowly from across the river, blinking slowly from her ghostly reflected eyes.

She looks down, smelling and tasting her own mouth. She leans and spits into the souppot. She wedges her hands between her thighs, squeezes. She raises her head eyes to the ceiling.

*Africa the man fighting the dog the leaning table the threeeyed smile
our Mississippi Maw's lake Our own constellation in our own crumbling sky That
he said is the cover and we were inside we are the gift*

“Return it shit get a cash refund I wish,” she says aloud.

She dresses smoking, catches a pubic hair in her zipper. She brushes her teeth, empties the souppot in the toilet. Turns out the light on their stars. One key for two locks, and you had to jiggle them both.

Ill find him at the Rain With what moneyd be nice to know

In the entrance hall she glances at their mailbox.

KLATCH + MAW

She doesn't walk the riverside, avoid the hassle of being taken for a whore. A fine walking rain is beginning to fall.

[1990]